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THE MOHAMMEDAN PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES

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One of the greatest of all the problems, in the Philippines which the American government has to face, and solve, if it wishes to retain the corner stone of freedom, is that of the Moro.

To most people the name "Moro" means nothing but the picture of the non-Christian tribes, and to so picture him is to place the Indian and the Jew in the same category, for both are non-Christian. The Moro is non-Christian in the sense of being a Mohammedan, but he is not a pagan. He prays to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but considers Mohammed and not Christ, the interpreter of God's word; therefore he does not believe in the Trinity and abhors images as symbols of worship. He is not Filipino by any ties of race, government, or religion, but it does not necessarily follow that he is a "dirty savage," even for the sake of excusing the attitude of Spain and America toward him.

There are very clear evidences of a Hindu invasion from India through the East Indies, Sumatra, Java, Celebes, and Borneo, as far as the southern islands of the Philippine group. In some of these, especially Java, they left vast ruins. In Palawan, Jolo, and Mindanao they left very little, except marks on the language, that show unquestionably a Sanscrit origin. Who these Hindus found in the Islands has not, at the present time, been ascertained, but probably the aborigines were related to the

Negrito peoples. Ethnologists place this invasion at fifteen hundred years, or more, ago.

When the Moslem religion began its wonderful advance from Arabia, it spread in every direction. One route taken by the Arab followers of Mohammed being through India, the Malay Peninsula, and the East Indies, over the same ground the Hindus had previously gone. When these Arabs reached the southern islands of the Philippine group, they converted and intermarried with this Hindu aboriginal mixture and formed the progenitors of the present Moro.

Their legends say, and history bears them out, that the original Moros were large people. This would seem quite in keeping with facts as both Hindus and Arabs are of large frame and stature. The aborigines with whom the Hindus intermarried, if belonging to the Negrito family, were small people. However, the hardships to which the Moros have been subjected in the last three hundred and fifty years would account for their deterioration mentally, morally and physically.

When the Spaniards first came to the Philippines in the 16th century the people of the Islands of Mindanao and Jolo were strong, brave sea-rovers, the "Norsemen" of the East. They pushed their "praos" into all the waters of the archipelago and made incursions on the settlements. They also converted many of the pagan Filipinos, and Mohammedan settlements were found as far north as Laguna de Bay, and Manila. If the Spanish invasion had been postponed for another hundred years the coasts of the whole archipelago would probably have been firmly Islam, as they are today Christian, for the Spaniard in his more than three hundred years of occupation, only converted the coast people. The mountain people are still pagan.

It is told of the Moro, that he was a pirate and ravaged the coasts of the other islands; probably he did. If so his name and "praos" should go down in history beside those of Drake, Raleigh, Cortez and the navies of Napoleon and George the Fourth.

The Koran teaches thrift and a reverence for the soil. The grace, which every Moslem says before meals is, "Oh God, we beseech thee to bless this food and give us strength to reproduce it." Before the coming of the Spaniards, the Moros are said to have lived in some degree of luxury; they tilled the soil, and had many servants. They were men of strong physique and a degree of intelligence, gained from their intercourse with the Arabs of the other East Indian islands, and from the fact that the Koran had been brought with them. They kept written records (*tarsila*) of families, not communities. Today the Sultans and Datus have their family histories as well recorded as any royal family of Europe—or the D. A. R's.

The Spaniards conquered the pagan Filipinos of the Visayan and Luzon groups. They were Malays and a very different people from the Moros. The Filipino has never been a man of much courage or ability when left to his own devices. He is happy with enough rice to keep soul and body together, two cotton garments, a fighting cock, and enough of the medium of exchange to bet on the chicken. For these reasons his conquest was easy. The present Filipino, like his progenitor is perfectly satisfied with himself and his surroundings. His Roman Catholic religion takes care of the future. The people who are agitating for independence are no more Filipinos than a Spaniard from Granada is a Moor. Among the *politicos*, there is probably not one man who is able to prove himself wholly Filipino. They are from one-fourth to nine-tenths Spanish or Chinese. There is no sympathy between the *Cacique* (Filipino boss) and the common people. To him the "tao" is simply an object for exploitation, with immature and easy rights before the law. This statement cannot be repeated too often because it underlies this whole problem of what to do with the Philippines. The Filipino people are not now, and never have been heard from; the man who is talking most and loudest is not a Filipino. He is a *Mestizo Cacique* or *politico*, but this is the element that would control the destiny of the Islands. The Moro is not a *politico* now and never has been. Another phase

of this subject generally lost sight of, is the fact that when we entered the Islands, it was the Christian Filipino that we came to help. It was he, who claimed our attention and who derived the most benefit from our being here. It is he also who has been most vociferous and unreasonable in the demand for independence, as well as lacking in appreciation of what American rule has done for him. Not so with the Moro. He responded cheerfully to all public measures for his protection, even in the matter of public health. The Subanus and Kalibugans have long pursued their own very effective methods of quarantine against smallpox and cholera, and willingly changed their habits to meet the requirements of American health officials.

Neither has the Moro the Mestizo element to any extent. His religion forbids indiscriminate crossing with races outside of Islam. There are Moros, so called but not Moslems, who wear the fez and assume the garb of the Mohammedan, for political, or other purposes of profit to themselves, but that should not lead to the mistaken idea, that the Moro, like the Filipino, is a mixture of everything with which he has come in contact in the last three hundred years.

When Spain endeavored to conquer the Moros, she insisted upon forcing the Roman Catholic religion upon them. The Spaniards said, "You must give up your religion and worship as we do or be driven out of existence." The Moro refused to do either, and for three hundred and fifty years has stood at bay, defending his religion and home. He has had no time for improvement, no chance to take on the amenities of civilization. Everything has gone before the ruthless hand of the destroyer, except the one thing, that to a Mohammedan is dearer than life, his religion. In this connection, it is well to remember that any solution of the Moro problem, by the American, or any other government, must count upon this element of his life, as the largest factor in the equation. In this constant struggle the Moro has retrogressed; certainly, who of us is strong enough to withstand such influences? It is a well recognized fact that, after the American people had come through the Civil War, there was a lower standard of morals

and an undercurrent of brutality, throughout the whole nation, that took years of peace to overcome. We had fought four years; multiply that by a hundred, and where would our boasted civilization be today? At the time of the American occupation of the Philippines, Spain was fighting the Lake Lanao Moros. The Spaniards had tried to build a road through that district and the Moros were in arms against them. This road was finished by American soldiers and maintained by the very Moros who had fought Spain in defense of their religion.

At the beginning of the war with Spain the United States government was not aware of the existence of any Mohammedans in the Philippines. When this fact was discovered and communicated to our Ambassador in Turkey, Oscar S. Straus of New York, he at once saw the possibilities which lay before us of a holy war. After a careful survey of the situation, he felt the need of prompt action on his part, in behalf of the United States; consequently he sought and gained an audience with the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, and requested him, as Caliph of the Moslem religion to act in behalf of the followers of Islam in the Philippines. The Caliph was not aware of such a body of Mohammedans and immediately took steps to ascertain whether or not they visited Mecca. A telegram to Mecca elicited the fact, that they not only visited Mecca in considerable numbers but that at that very time there were Moros from Sulu in the Sacred City.

Mr. Strauss was armed with the American treaty of 1796 with Tripoli, then an independent nation, which has never been abrogated, in which George Washington and his successor, John Adams concurred. Article II, Section IX reads:

As the government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of Musselmen; and as said states never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two nations.

In 1806, after the war with the Barbary States, the same statements were reiterated by Jefferson. We have various treaties with the Ottoman Empire, extending from that time to 1875, all showing our absolute lack of unfriendliness toward the Mohammedan religion.

After due consideration of these facts, the Sultan, as Caliph caused a message to be sent to the Mohammedans of the Philippine Islands forbidding them to enter into any hostilities against the Americans, inasmuch as no interference with their religion would be allowed under American rule. As the Moros have never asked more than that, it is not surprising, that they refused all overtures made, by Aguinaldo's agents, at the time of the Filipino insurrection.

President McKinley sent a personal letter of thanks to Mr. Straus for the excellent work he had done, and said, its accomplishment had saved the United States at least twenty thousand troops in the field. If the reader will pause to consider what this means in men and also the millions in money, he will appreciate this wonderful piece of diplomacy, in averting a holy war.

Aguinaldo's agents were repeatedly sent among the Moros near the coasts, yet they not only stood fast, but offered their services in aid of the United States. In our subsequent dealings with the Moros of Sulu and Mindanao, we seem to have lost sight of these facts.

Major General George W. Davis, in his report of 1902, after a careful study of the problem says:

But they are Mohammedans, and attempts at conversion to Christianity if made, would probably result, as have all other attempts to proselyte these people, viz. in a complete failure. A prominent priest of the Jesuit order, who had spent twenty years of his life in contact with the Mohammedans of Mindanao, said to the writer that no missionary had yet succeeded in making converts among adult Mohammedans, in this or any other country. If missionaries are sent among them, they are doomed to failure, and besides, any interference with their religion would be resented as an insult and resisted to the death. Our government will not, of course, molest them in the practice of their religion so long as they observe our laws. But our government should not permit others (any persons) at least at present, to attempt their conversion to Christianity.

Here is the crux of the whole matter. If the Moros' religion had been respected, all else would have been easy. The Dutch in the East Indies, with their 35,000,000 of Mohammedans, know that; England and France recognize it. To go back one step; when Aguinaldo's agents found that they could not persuade the Moros to join them and the insurrection failed, some of these men remained in the Moro country and under the guise of friendship—proceeded to poison the Moslems against the United States government. When the cedula was increased, they said, "The extra money is to be used to force you to become Christians. It is not to give you a better government." Some of the Moros believed these stories and resisted the head tax (cedula) with their lives. It was a little unfortunate, that missions, as such, were allowed in their country because it gave color to the stories told them by the Christian Filipinos, and added to, rather than aided, the labors of the government for their betterment.

It was several years before the writer, as governor, was able to gain the confidence of these strange people. One reason for this being, that his attitude was that of many other persons, viz., that they were only "savages." The awakening came, when the "Organic Law for the Moro Province," was published in their dialect and one of their most intelligent men wrote a very respectful letter to Governor Finley, in which he remarked upon the kindness of the government in taking so much trouble for the Moros and said it must be a good thing, or the Americans would not have done all this work that took time and much learning; and then he added the crowning sentence of the whole letter; "We beseech you to send it to the people who need it, for we do not." That was a bolt from a clear sky. Why were these people so sure they did not need this law, no savage ever penned such an assertion? What had they that took the place of it? were all questions that instantly presented themselves. We began an investigation to ascertain, if possible, these things and found: first of all, that they had the Koran, which was not a Bible for learned men to dispute over, but a plain book of law,

that guides every act of a Mohammedan's life, toward God, his government, his neighbor, his family and himself.

After a careful study of the Koran, and an equally careful inspection of their teachers, we found that they were not being taught in accordance with the doctrines of their religion as laid down in the Koran. We thereupon embodied in our next report, a request for Mohammedan teachers of accredited learning and rank. The Sultans of Sulu and Magindanao, and many of the leading men recognized at once what such a request meant, and were overjoyed, because, as they said themselves, they recognized that their need in this direction was great and imperative, if progress was to be made. Every year we embodied the same thing in our reports and the Moro waited and prayed for the consummation of this wish of their fathers and themselves. And here is the "deadly parallel:" All these years while the caciques of the Filipinos were opposing every step of progress, and insisting upon their independence, the Moro leaders were asking that the United States government be not withdrawn from the Islands, and stating that while they wished to be true Mohammedans, they also wanted to be loyal Americans; and it was just here, that we Americans added to the intolerance with which we had treated our own Indians, the sister sin of indifference. We hesitated to aid these people in these desires, and because they objected to sending their children to schools that taught a language that forever cut them off from reading the Koran, which is in sacred Arabic, we blamed them. We failed at first to appreciate this need and did not aid them in learning this sacred language; forgetting that we roll our eyes heavenward and clasp our hands over the saintliness of the Pilgrims, who braved the dangers of an unknown sea, and endured the rigors of New England winters, in order that their children might not forget the faith of their fathers and the language learned at their mother's knee, in a foreign country. This is a most curious old world, and one of its most curious phases is our attitude toward the "other fellow," if he fails to view life from our standpoint. What is a virtue,

in a man who sees the world as we do, is a vile sin in the one who does not.

In the organic law of the Philippine Islands (Civil Government Act, approved by the Congress of the United States, July 1, 1902) we make the following solemn promise to the Moros and Filipinos. (Section 5. Guaranties of personal rights.)

That no law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble to petition the Government for redress of grievances.

That no law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof and that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, *shall forever* be allowed.

In the Treaty of Peace between the United States and Spain, signed at Paris on December 10, 1898, Article 10, provides that:

The inhabitants of the territories over which Spain relinquishes or cedes her sovereignty shall be secured in the free exercise of their religion.

Our sin against the Moro is all the more grievous because of:—first, the basic principles upon which the government of the United States is founded, not to interfere with any religion; second, that we assured the Moros through the head of the Moslem religion, the Sultan of Turkey, that this was the case; third, that the Moro, himself, was anxious to become and remain a good citizen of the United States; fourth, that whenever he became convinced, that any measure for his improvement had not behind it the sinister motive of divorcing him from his religion, he readily accepted it. In the Lake Lanao country we inherited the trouble from the Spaniards. If we had waited until the Moros were fully cognizant of our intentions, not to interfere with their religion, the road could have been built without the slightest objection on their part. But they had absolutely no way of knowing that our attitude was not that of the Spaniard. They were so remote from Sulu, they had failed to receive the message of the Caliph, before the trouble began.

When the writer went among the Moros, over whom he had control and fully explained any measure, there was no objection on their part after he had shown them that he kept faith with them, or in case of failure to do so, could give a reason for it. They trusted him so fully that they conferred upon him every honor in their power, and made him their Ambassador to the Caliph, with a petition for teachers and to inform him, the Caliph, that they were true followers of Islam, but also loyal citizens of the United States and wished to remain so; and that they wished to be taught their duty to their God and to their country. But why Mohammedan teachers? Because they know the Koran and the life and purposes of the Prophet, and are familiar with the sacred Arabic, the prayers and forms of worship.

The Moslem is too well armored in his religion, to be converted to Christianity. He has the same God. His Koran teaches constant prayer, and inculcates abstinence from all intoxicants and temperance in all things. He lives by faith and his God is an Entity not a Person. He has no Sunday because every day is devoted to prayer. He has very definite reasons for rejecting the Trinity, which are not to be argued away. Yes, he is a polygamist—and an Oriental harking back to the days of Solomon—the latter explains the former. This question of polygamy is being solved by both the Turk and by the Moro, upon both economical and educational grounds. It is not the creed of Islam that is to blame for it, but the following out of an Oriental custom as old as Abraham, and which still manifests itself among the Christian nations in the clandestine resort to concubinage, which after all may be the primal instinct of Natural Selection, that the veneer of civilization is not yet thick enough to cover.

If we wish the honor and satisfaction of successfully governing the Moro we must have the patience and skill to embrace his viewpoint of life. It is very difficult for the white man to interpret the Moro point of view. Wholly impossible unless he lives with the Moros for many years.

Having taken this most important step, we are prepared to advance with the Moro along the line of his own culture,

religion and customary laws, carrying them all without neglect, ridicule, contempt or violence, while continually pointing the way to higher ideals and better results in his own system. Such a course will remove suspicion, beget confidence, promote loyalty, neutralize resistance, and insure peace and progress.

Why not show our qualities in leadership by responding to the prayers of the Moros and by aiding them to fully attain their best ideals?

If those ideals are finally found to be below the standard of the white man the Moro will be the first to realize the shortcoming and adopt another course. If the white man is loath to abide this test he is unfit to lead the way. Such a course is not compromising to the Christian but exhibits the highest qualities of consistency and toleration. If we show the white feather regarding our ideals by refusing confidence, patience and toleration we cultivate contempt and resistance in the Moro. He judges us keenly by our ideals and especially by their exemplification in our daily life.

Our assumption that because a conception and its realization is good for the Christian it must necessarily be good for the Moro, and that he must finally adopt it is not conclusive to the Moslem. He questions the motive and ultimate purpose of the scheme, and draws the conclusion that another plan is under way to change his faith, and in most cases he is right. A demonstration of our failure to get his view point.